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General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

65th plenary meeting
Friday, 5 December 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 59 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Draft resolution (A/52/L.7)

Amendment (A/52/L.47)

Ms. Ashipala-Musavyi (Namibia): Let me at the outset thank the officers of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council for the outstanding way in which they conducted the work of the Group during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen on their re-election.

Namibia associates itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, who spoke on behalf of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and by the Permanent Representative of Egypt, who spoke on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. However, because of the importance of the topic under discussion, I would like to make additional comments and observations.

The question of the reform of the Security Council is, broadly speaking, complex and thus requires in-depth discussion. It has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since 1993, when the Open-ended Working Group was established. Four years have gone by, yet there still exists a divergence of views among Member States on all major issues, such as the composition and size of the Security Council and, above all, the question of the veto. It is important, however, to note that some progress has been made on the transparency and working methods of the Working Group.

In view of what I have just said, my delegation strongly supports the recommendation of the Open-ended Working Group, set out in document A/51/47, that its work should continue during the fifty-second session, taking into account the progress achieved during previous sessions, and that it should submit a report to the Assembly before the end of the fifty-second session.

Let me emphasize that the notion of a quick fix is not acceptable to Namibia. We are in favour of the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of membership, and therefore will oppose in the strongest terms possible any attempt to ignore the genuine interests of the developing countries, especially those of Africa. Africa has spoken. Our Heads of States or Government met at Harare, Zimbabwe, in June this year, and made a declaration which states, *inter alia*, that Africa is entitled to at least two permanent seats in the Security Council to be allocated in accordance with the system of rotation based on the current established criteria of the OAU.

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The Open-ended Working Group should continue to be the forum to search for and reach a consensus. A reformed and democratic Security Council should reflect the reality of today: the increase in the number of States Members of the United Nations. The principle of equitable geographical representation must be strictly observed. This would enhance the credibility, legitimacy and moral authority of the Council.

When the Security Council was formed, the world was not as it is now. Today, very important developments have taken place; these have reshaped the world. On the whole, colonialism has been eradicated; many countries have gained their freedom and independence; and the number of States Members of the United Nations has vastly increased. It is therefore important that a reformed Security Council should reflect those realities.

Namibia is opposed to the veto, for we believe, as we have stated before, that it is outdated, obsolete and undemocratic. We should therefore work tirelessly for its complete elimination. But if the present permanent five are not prepared to relinquish their veto power, then why should we discriminate against new permanent members? We would not support any idea for different categories of permanent members. All new permanent members should be accorded the same prerogatives enjoyed by the present permanent five — no less, no more.

Finally, my delegation believes that the work of the Open-ended Working Group should resume early next year in order to allow enough time for delegations to consider in detail all the proposals that are on the table.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): The delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania associates itself with the statement made on this item by the Permanent Representative of Egypt, His Excellency Ambassador Nabil Elaraby, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. We also join others in welcoming Ambassador Udovenko's assumption of the office of Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. We trust that during his tenure of office he will sustain the dedication and vigour that characterized his predecessor, Ambassador Razali of Malaysia.

We also welcome the reappointment of Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand as Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group. We commend them for the arduous work they continue to undertake on our behalf. We wish to assure the Working Group officers of our continued support as they judiciously strive to steer our work towards its noble objective.

It is important to underscore the fact that this meeting is being held at a time when consideration of the Secretary-General's reform proposals is in full swing. Already the General Assembly has taken a decision on the actions proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan. That is the backdrop against which we are discussing the reform of the Security Council. It would be unfortunate, to say the least, if our deliberations and conclusions were to ignore completely the atmosphere of reform that has pervaded the fifty-second session.

My delegation is very well aware that we are dealing with a very complex subject that gives rise to strong opposing views. However, it is our considered view that we need to clarify issues so that those that are non-controversial can be isolated. In this regard, the compilation that has been done by the Working Group is helpful. Perhaps for future work the Group's officers could draw up a list of the difficult elements and institute negotiations with a view to narrowing differences and eventually seeking important consensus or compromise. It is vitally important that there should be movement even on this track lest cynicism with regard to the world Organization be given a shot in the arm.

The restructuring of the Security Council is a matter central to the reform of the United Nations, and it is of concern to all Member States, and to my country in particular. The debate on the current agenda item amply demonstrates this fact. It is a matter of serious regret that what is seen to be a shared concern for the reform of the Security Council has not been translated into tangible progress on the ground.

Today, almost four years since we embarked on this endeavour, there is little to give us hope for the realization of our aspirations in the foreseeable future. The status quo does not augur well for what is, and has always been, an urgent need to reform the Security Council.

Our delegation welcomes the report of the Open-ended Working Group contained in document A/51/47. We support the recommendation that the Working Group be allowed to continue its work, taking into account progress made so far. In rendering this

support, we fervently hope that meaningful progress can be made towards concrete achievements. One of the positive aspects of the report of the Open-ended Working Group is the compilation of the series of progressive proposals and reports on the subject. We hope this quick reference point will facilitate the discussions we need to build on it.

We wish to restate our support for both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) positions on the question of the reform of the Security Council. We note with appreciation that there is broad support for those positions even beyond their respective organizations. Our position is predicated on the need to reform the Security Council in the direction of making it more democratic, in terms both of its membership, particularly providing for increased membership in both categories from the developing countries, and also in its working methods.

We should like to reiterate our position, as enunciated by our Foreign Minister, the Honourable Jakaya M. Kikwete, in his address to the NAM Ministerial Meeting last September. Tanzania is worried by

> "the assumptions that if we cannot agree on who is to take what seat in the reformed Security Council, then let us defer the whole matter to a later date. Some have even gone to the extent of suggesting that: then let there be no reform of the Security Council of the United Nations".

He further counselled:

> "if we allow ourselves to be bogged down by arguments of who will do or deserves what, we may lose sight of the more fundamental issue of a firm or formal decision on the principle of expansion. Let us have no illusions. The matter has not been decided yet. It is, today, possible to push through that principle. It may not be so tomorrow. It is our firm view that we should not let the opportunity of an early decision pass us. Let us not quarrel over how to divide the cake. Let us first get it".

The counsel of my Foreign Minister remains more relevant today than it was three months ago. We see the overriding objective of Security Council reform to be that of bringing about its greater democratization by restoring the balance of representation between the developed North and the developing South in both categories of membership. We see this as a process of justice and empowerment. Consequently, if we reach agreement on a balanced expansion of membership in both categories, and reform its working methods, as well as its decision-making procedures, we shall have erected a firm foundation for a dynamic, efficient and more relevant Council whose jurisdiction and decisions will enjoy universal acceptability.

To sum up, we are opposed to any quick-fix formulas. Reform is imperative, but it must be equitable and enhance democratic participation and accountability. At the same time, we should not allow ourselves to be entangled in interminable debates. We need to reach agreement as soon as possible.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): At the outset, allow me to join the other delegations which have spoken on this item in congratulating the President on having facilitated its consideration and thus assuring the smooth continuation next year of discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council.

In this regard, the Philippine delegation strongly believes that the Working Group remains the only body, other than the General Assembly itself, with the mandate of considering all matters pertaining to reform of the Council. We therefore urge all delegations to continue utilizing the Working Group as a forum for seeking a negotiated outcome on this subject, particularly through the consideration of all proposals on clusters I and II in an open and transparent fashion.

We also congratulate the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, the Permanent Representatives of Finland and Thailand, on their well-deserved re-election. It is vital that the Working Group continue to benefit from their wisdom and knowledge of the issues related to this item. Their guidance will be necessary in steering us to a successful outcome.

My delegation also wishes to support the statement of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. In this connection, we reiterate our adherence to the various Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) positions and negotiating papers on both the expansion and reform of the working methods and decision-making process of the Security Council, including the more recent positions adopted at the NAM Ministerial Meetings in New Delhi, last April, and in New York, last September.

As for the future direction of work, we believe delegations should build upon the progress achieved at the last session of the Working Group on both Clusters I and II, particularly on the latter, with a view to reaching a fair and acceptable package agreement.

Regarding cluster I, the Working Group at its last session identified the key elements which should be addressed in depth in any expansion of the membership of the Council. We must now clarify further these elements and determine whether compromise outcomes on them are achievable. These elements, as we all know, include: first, the new size and composition of Security Council membership, including both new permanent and non-permanent members; secondly, the concept of regional rotation for possible new permanent members; and, thirdly, the general review mechanism to be adopted in the event that new permanent members are added to the Council.

Many specific proposals have been made on these and other related expansion matters. Thus, in order to facilitate our work, and avoid repeating discussions of previous years, we suggest that the Working Group seriously examine the possibility of working on the basis of a single rolling document or discussion text, so as to focus our discussions on cluster I issues. This document could be a synthesis or compilation of the various elements related to cluster I, which in turn could be expanded upon or refined. At the very least, such a text could facilitate discussions as well as possible advancement on issues, as was the case with cluster II on which the Working Group held very significant and productive discussions on the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement negotiating paper.

With respect to cluster II, we believe that in the light of the discussions on the Non-Aligned Movement negotiating paper, during which specific measures, were identified and discussed, the Working Group is now in a position not only to refine the proposed specific measures, but also to agree on measures which would enhance the transparency of the Council's working methods and increase the participation of non-members in its decision-making process. Specific measures which we believe are ripe for early agreement, in the context of a package, include the application of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter to the informal consultations as a whole; substantive consultations with troop-contributing countries on all aspects of peacekeeping operations; and measures to increase transparency of the work of the various bodies created by the Council, such as the sanctions Committees. We should also not forget the importance of reforming the use of the veto by limiting its application to Chapter VII actions only, as proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement.

Although we acknowledge that the Council is undertaking work to improve its working methods, a commitment to institutionalize cluster II measures should also be part of a package agreement on the reform of the Security Council.

Let me conclude by assuring you, Mr. President, that the Philippine delegation is ready to continue helping in any way towards reaching a successful outcome. However, we should all bear in mind that the item on the reform of the Security Council has been under consideration by the General Assembly for roughly four years without agreement having been reached on any issue. We are all aware of the reasons for this. Should this situation continue, we would sooner or later have to take stock of the situation and in that regard take hard and realistic decisions on the course and direction of our work. Nevertheless, the Philippines still believes the Working Group should continue and try its best to make progress on as many issues as possible. Perhaps through that process a critical mass could be reached, making possible some type of package agreement in the near future.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretariat for its elaboration of document A/51/47. My gratitude also goes to the former President of the General Assembly and Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Razali, as well as to the co-Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand for their relentless, tireless efforts to hold an open and constructive dialogue with all delegations, no matter how large or small.

The long list of speakers on this agenda item only emphasizes its vital importance for the Organization. Indeed, the reform and revitalization of the United Nations are inseparable from the reform of its Security Council. Recognizing this importance, the General Assembly, by its resolution 48/26 of 3 December 1993, established the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation On and Increase In the Membership of the Security Council and other Matters Related to the Security Council. In four years the Working Group has achieved certain progress in discussions of cluster II issues related to the working methods and transparency of the Security Council. This led some delegations to urge that we proceed with

cluster II, leaving aside the cluster I issues related to size and composition, decision-making and the veto, and the election of new permanent members. Further developments, however, showed that lack of progress in one cluster inevitably affects progress in the other group of issues. It has become quite obvious that true comprehensive reforms aimed at rendering the Security Council more efficient and more effective are impossible without resolving the problems of its size and equitable composition. Working papers A/AC.247/1997/CRP.1, submitted by the Chairman, A/AC.247/1997/CRP.6, by the Vice-Chairmen, and A/AC.247/1997/CRP.8, by the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group, have revealed this distinct and wide divergence of views. Draft resolutions A/52/L.7 and A/52/L.47 are another reflection of the existing differences.

The basic elements of the position of Kyrgyzstan were reflected in the general debate of the General Assembly. More than once the Kyrgyz delegation expressed its support for the expansion of Security Council membership so as to adequately reflect the realities of our changing world. In the view of our delegation, the increase in membership should take place in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. We appreciate the readiness of Germany and Japan to voluntarily assume a greater burden of responsibility for peace and security in the world deriving from permanent status in the Security Council. We also strongly advocate the equitable representation of the South among both the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. Our delegation is quite flexible about the size. However, in our view it should not exceed 25. Further increase in the membership will hamper the decision-making capability and, accordingly, the efficiency of the Security Council.

We share the view of those delegations that consider the veto anachronistic and undemocratic. Ideally, we would like to see the scope of the veto limited to the issues falling under Chapter VII of the Charter. This being a problem, we believe that new permanent members should enjoy the same rights and prerogatives as the original ones. The creation of a new category of permanent members without a veto would lead to a more undemocratic Security Council.

The divergence in positions and differences of view make it difficult to reach consensus on this issue. We should be ready to take a decision in conformity with Article 18 of the Charter by two thirds of those present and voting. We agree that certain criteria for the candidates seeking permanent membership should be worked out. However, we realize that the candidates elected according to these criteria might fail to meet them in the future for various reasons. Hence, the review of membership at some point in the future is of paramount importance as regards new permanent members.

The concept of rotating permanent seats at this stage poses some difficulties for our delegation. It lacks precision as to its implementation. Therefore, it would be worthwhile examining further all its aspects, including its implications for the local States. However, we are flexible as to the eventual application of this concept and we also think that, alternatively, the regional States will have to decide on the modalities of its implementation.

My delegation wishes to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his leadership and sustained efforts throughout the process of discussions and negotiations. We are grateful for his contribution to the reaching of agreement with the interested delegations not to take action on the proposed draft resolutions. We are convinced that, while it is important to proceed with a sense of urgency, we should at the same time avoid undue haste and avoid imposing a time-frame for the conclusion of this crucial issue. We should continue to seek as wide an agreement as possible. This, in turn, would reinforce the Security Council in its role as the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, acting on behalf of Member States.

Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola): First of all, let me state that, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Angola associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on this item, on behalf of the Member States of the Movement.

Since it first considered the issue, the General Assembly has — through frank debate — advanced the question of the restructuring of the Security Council. Although differences still exist on how to reform and expand this body, we strongly believe that some progress has been made.

The discussions within the Working Group were both constructive and fruitful. Some very important proposals were presented — proposals which require deep and thorough consideration by the membership. I must note in particular the proposal made by the Non-Aligned Movement, which expresses the views of the majority of the United Nations membership. The African common position also deserves due consideration, given its merit

and the fact that it represents the position of the largest regional group.

While speaking about the work of the Working Group, I cannot fail to praise the two co-Vice-Chairmen, the Ambassadors of Finland and Thailand, for their stewardship and their efforts in helping to bridge the gap between the different positions expressed during the debates. I take this opportunity to congratulate them on their well-deserved reappointment.

Angola is of the view that reform of the Security Council and the expansion of its membership should be part of one package and must be pursued following general agreement among the entire membership. But, although we do not favour the establishment of any time-frame for that process, we also do not want to see this process continue indefinitely. The time is ripe to move forward.

Angola's position regarding the reform and expansion of the Security Council is consistent with the positions supported by the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement, reiterated most recently at their summits in Harare and New Delhi, respectively.

We strongly support enlargement of the Security Council membership in both the non-permanent and permanent categories.

Countries that play vital roles in today's international relations, through their outstanding contribution to the maintenance of peace and security in the world, their support for the economic and social progress of all peoples and their defence of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, deserve consideration for permanent membership.

In this context, Angola fully supports Brazil's quest for a permanent seat in the Security Council. In this connection, the Council of Ministers of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries endorsed in its last declaration the candidacy of Brazil for a permanent seat.

This, however, does not preclude the principle, which we firmly maintain, that the extent, nature and modalities of the expansion should be based upon equitable geographic distribution and the sovereign equality of States. Non-aligned and African countries should be represented in a new, reformed Security Council in both categories. Angola will oppose any attempt to exclude them. As to the size of the Council, we think that the enlargement should encompass up to 26 members. Africa should be allocated no fewer than two permanent seats.

On the question of the veto, we support its abolition. But until it is abolished Angola is of the view that its use must be restricted to issues falling under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Finally, let me express Angola's commitment to providing a positive contribution to the negotiations during the forthcoming meetings of the Working Group. For the reform and expansion process to bear fruit, the negotiations should be transparent, democratic and in all cases be conducted in an open-ended setting.

Mr. Bull (Liberia): At the outset, permit me to extend my delegation's appreciation to the President for the forthright manner in which he is guiding our deliberations in an effort to achieve general agreement on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

In this connection, my delegation welcomes the reappointment of Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand as co-Vice-Chairmen of the high-level Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council. We are confident that when the Working Group resumes early next year the process will, under the President's guidance, be further advanced so that decisions can, hopefully, be reached before the end of his presidency.

It is my delegation's considered view that Security Council reform is not an end in itself, but, rather, a means to an end. Indeed, the reform process is seeking to enhance the effectiveness of the Council, to make it more representative and democratic and to achieve transparency in its working methods. Acknowledgment of the need for reform is in recognition of the current global realities, but reform will remain an ongoing process.

Over the past four years of intensive discussions progress has been made in the Open-ended Working Group on issues relating to the working methods of the Council. Indeed, members of the Council have increasingly implemented some of the recommendations emanating from the proposals of the Working Group, in an effort to make the Council's work more transparent and inclusive of the larger membership of the United

Nations. What remains to be done is to adopt those measures so as to ensure their permanence and constancy.

On the other major issue, that of the expansion and actual composition of the Security Council, there are still some important differences regarding the modalities for the enlargement of the Council. There is, however, overwhelming agreement among Member States on the need to increase the membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories in order to redress the geographical imbalance which presently exists. There is also a growing appreciation and recognition of the important contributions which both Japan and Germany will make as members of an expanded Council in the fulfilment of its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

While there seems to be general agreement on the reform of the Security Council, should be cautious and we not rush the process in order to satisfy particular concerns. It is therefore important that any final decision on this matter lend itself to the provisions of Article 108 regarding amendments to the Charter.

The President returned to the Chair.

Meanwhile, my delegation wholeheartedly supports the African common position for the allocation in the Security Council of at least two permanent seats to the continent, a position eloquently stated this morning by the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President Robert Mugabe. Likewise, my delegation fully associates itself with the statement of the Permanent Representative of Egypt, Ambassador Elaraby, in his capacity as Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement on the reform and expansion of the Security Council.

My delegation wishes to emphasize that current realities of the post-cold-war era — the diffusion of political, economic and military power among diverse regions of the world — require that decisions affecting the maintenance of international peace and security be made in a more representative and democratic manner, mindful of the sovereign equality of all States. If the Member States are genuinely committed to achieving the desired reforms, then we must muster the requisite political will and spirit of compromise so that the present reform process can be successfully concluded. In this regard, I wish to assure you, Mr. President, of the full cooperation and support of the Liberian delegation.

Mr. Guillen (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all, the delegation of Peru wishes to acknowledge, with great appreciation, the thorough and patient work of the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, under the chairmanship of your predecessor, Mr. President, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia. It is a pleasure to congratulate them, once again, on their re-election, this time under your presidency.

Much of what we say to the General Assembly may already have been said during the many meetings of the Working Group. However, we must address this subject, because we need to tell the General Assembly what our views are and, above all, refer to the future action of the Working Group, in which Peru will continue to participate constructively.

We continue to believe that an increase in the membership of the Security Council, to make it representative and legitimate, must include developing countries from the three regions in the category of both permanent and non-permanent members. We believe that the willingness of developed and developing countries to become permanent members could make the Security Council more representative, as long as balance is ensured, not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, through a legitimate and comprehensive agreement. Specific reference was made to this by the Permanent Representative of Egypt, the coordinator of the respective group of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We will continue to maintain that membership of the Security Council requires loyalty and commitment to the Charter and to international law, it also requires a contribution to international peace and security, by which we do not mean only economic and military contributions, which are often cited, nor do we refer to the size of countries. We believe that we should also not overlook contributions to the attainment of the objectives established in the Charter with regard to the progressive development of international law, in which the major Powers have not been the only protagonists. In addition, permanent members are committed to cooperation with the developing countries, to nuclear and conventional disarmament, to arms control and to a moral code whereby countries do not trade in or export weapons to

the third world, the source of most threats to peace and upheavals.

Among the various positive results of the Working Group, we feel it important to place on record that under both the co-Vice-Chairmen, in the Group, where all the members of the United Nations are represented, all members have had the opportunity to express their positions or proposals.

However, the inevitable complexity and the implications of all the unresolved elements should not lead us to make a kind of inventory of statements that may give the impression of implicit votes. We cannot refer to everything in these statements. The very fact that the most diametrically opposed positions have used contradictory numerical estimates makes us think that these calculations could change if applied one by one to all the separate paragraphs and subparagraphs of the groups or clusters that a joint decision would contain — that is, on the questions of permanent members, non-permanent members, rotation, discrimination, the veto, procedural matters, working methods and so forth.

The reform of the Security Council, to which very few are opposed, at least publicly, is viewed with apprehension with regard to permanent membership to be assumed by developed and developing countries, because of the way the present permanent members have exercised the power the Charter conferred upon them so that they could ensure international peace and security and not their own national interests. This perception has not waned in the post-cold-war period. The potential use of the veto has obliged the permanent members to negotiate decisions, which, though based on a consensus, have been and remain insufficient in confronting dramatic cases. This has reduced the Council's authority and, unjustly, that of the Organization itself.

At its roots, that apprehension also exists because the permanent members of the Security Council have the power, above all, to decide what constitutes a breach of and threat to the peace, and to agree on measures that constitute decisions without appeal that all Member States are committed to carry out because they have agreed that the Council acts on their behalf. This is a power not possessed by any other institution or alliance in the international sphere, not even NATO. The only thing about the United Nations that seems to be of interest to the great Powers is this capacity to legitimize their political objectives from the permanent seats on the Security Council.

The situation that the high-level Working Group needs to overcome, in our opinion, has come about for three reasons. First of all, it results from the serious and immovable obstacle set up by a few countries which refuse to consider the possibility of an increase in membership to more than 21 countries. This would create even greater imbalance and discrimination in the current membership of the Council, to the extent that even countries that aspire to permanent membership find this position unacceptable. On this point, a distinguished permanent representative quite rightly asked last summer whether an interest in expanding the category of permanent members on the Security Council truly exists.

The second problem that affects all Member States, including the countries that aspire to permanent membership, is the unrestricted and unrelinquishable privilege of the veto, above and beyond Chapter VII. Precisely because it is impossible for those who enjoy the privilege of halting any action or reform to renounce that privilege, we believe that the proposal to request permanent members to make a declaration of intent on the use of that power is insufficient, since that is already contained in the so-called San Francisco declaration. It is we, the immense majority of Member States, who after more than 50 years must make an alternative declaration to that of San Francisco regarding the use of the veto, which had to be accepted in order for this Organization to be established, and that alternative declaration must be adopted by the General Assembly.

A third element, which has not been sufficiently dealt with and which is complex, but vital, in our opinion, is the legitimacy of the decision that could be presented to the General Assembly. We believe that in the case of a decision on new permanent members to be elected by the General Assembly — a situation unforeseen in the Charter — a favourable vote by two thirds of Member States is not sufficient to give the broadest legitimacy to such an unprecedented action.

I would like to add a fourth, concurrent point which, while it is the subject of another working group, cannot fail to affect the credibility and efficiency of the Security Council. At the very time when a number of countries have felt a decision is needed to strengthen the Security Council, non-compliance by a permanent member with its commitment to make a partial payment of its financial contribution has placed the Organization in a state of insolvency and has even affected peacekeeping operations, which have already been restricted.

Thus it is not the developing countries or those of the Non-Aligned Movement that have created dilemmas as regards the expansion and reform of the Security Council.

My delegation reiterates its readiness to continue to participate constructively in the forthcoming negotiations of the high-level Working Group, with the necessary urgent attention and without pre-established deadlines, and in harmony with our region. We hope for the same constructive attitude on the part of all countries, without which a just, legitimate and equitable reform will not be acceptable.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): The importance Member States attach to a reformed, modernized and expanded Security Council has once again been demonstrated by the very large and impressive number of speakers in this debate.

The question of how this reform should be achieved has been the subject of intense, often difficult, but we believe ultimately valuable discussion in the Open-ended Working Group. We think it is important to recognize that although there may be difficulties and a sense of the debate having stalled in some areas, we have made substantive progress in many areas, even though, obviously, some important differences remain, particularly on the numbers and the veto.

It is important that Australia, as so many others have already done, recognize that the Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand and Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland, have been dedicated in their efforts to try to move our debate forward, and they deserve our thanks. Certainly my delegation pledges to work closely with them again next year.

Australia has set out its position clearly over the past four years of debate. Frankly, we hesitated to inscribe ourselves on the speakers' list. We were very concerned about taking up time repeating views that are already known. Everybody is under pressure as this Assembly draws to a close, and nobody wants to listen to delegations repeating things that they have said again and again.

However, listening to this debate over the last two days, and reading the speeches that I could not personally be here to hear, persuaded me of the importance of adding our name to the list — which I think is just about reaching its end — because it seemed to me that these presentations have assumed quite an importance. If you review the last few days, the presentations have constituted an important checklist of the state of play, and effectively they provide, at least it seems to us, an important foundation for our work in 1998. And so it was in that sense, and in the spirit of all of us saying at this point in this General Assembly what we want to prepare for constructive work next year, that we decided that it was valuable to register today just the key elements of Australia's position.

First, Australia believes the Security Council should be expanded to no more than 25. Secondly, it should include, as permanent members, important Powers able to make a major contribution to international peace and security, particularly, at this time, Japan and Germany. Thirdly, the Security Council should also include permanent seats for under-represented regions. Fourthly, it must include, too, a significant number of additional, non-permanent seats.

Like so many others, Australia is concerned that the interests of small and medium-sized countries not be forgotten in this exercise. Middle Powers such as Australia have made a significant contribution to the United Nations since its foundation — for example, in the areas of disarmament, development, peacekeeping, human rights and the social sector.

In this context, we think it right that agreement on Security Council expansion also include provision for a review of any new arrangements after 10 years, because that review would allow countries such as Australia, as well as all members of the international community, to have a further opportunity to examine the size, composition and working methods of the Council to ensure that it is commensurate with contemporary reality.

In addition, we believe that Security Council enlargement should be accompanied by a new understanding to limit the scope and the application of the veto. Our long-standing historical concerns about the veto are well known, and those concerns evidently are shared by a very large majority of Member States. We should not miss the opportunity afforded by the current debate on the reform of the Security Council to address these concerns.

I want also to pay special tribute to the work of the former President of the General Assembly and former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Razali, for the outstanding contribution he made to pursuing Security Council reform during his presidency.

Coming back to my theme of repetition, I wish to say that, looking ahead to next year, the Working Group must not continue simply to debate the issues all over again. All issues — of composition and size, of decision-making and the veto, of improvements to the working methods of the Council and of periodic review — have been comprehensively discussed. We need now to move into serious negotiations on concrete outcomes in the form of a package of amendments to the Charter to be presented to the General Assembly for consideration, in accordance with Article 108 of the Charter.

In conclusion, my delegation pledges its support to you, Mr. President, including in your capacity as Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, to take our work forward in a practical and constructive manner towards an outcome which will result in an expanded, more representative, more transparent Security Council, better equipped to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to express, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail, former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, as well as to his two Vice-Chairmen, for their efforts to strengthen the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. We also hope that the Working Group will continue under your leadership, Mr. President, and we wish you success.

Successive political events have demonstrated the urgent need for bestowing an effective democratic character in international relations, especially in terms of the procedures of the United Nations system and its various organs. At a time when mounting challenges confront this Organization, especially with regard to questions of international peace and security, as an inevitable outcome of the changes that occurred as a result of the end of the cold war, it has become imperative to engage in a broader programme of reform of United Nations organs, especially the Security Council, on the basis of transparency, equality, the rule of law and the reciprocal interests of all States, with a view to enabling that important body, entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, to fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the principles of the Charter.

When the United Nations was established in 1945, its membership was 51 States, and there were six non-permanent members of the Security Council. This was 12 per cent of the total membership at that time. But today, with a growing membership that has reached 185 States, the structure of the Security Council does not reflect the true reality of the political and economic changes that have occurred in recent decades. Despite the four years that have elapsed since the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, the differences in the positions of States continue to endure. We therefore support the set of constructive and objective proposals put forward by the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which take cognizance of the realities of change, the results of the political developments witnessed by today's world and the legitimate concerns of the developing countries in keeping with the concepts of the Charter and of the rules of international law. In addition, in our view any action within this framework should constitute an indivisible part of a joint and integrated package that, in its objectives will ensure the principles of balance, equal sovereignty among States and equitable geographical representation and that will achieve transparency and democracy in the practices and procedures and methods of work of the Security Council, including in the Council's decision-making.

The United Arab Emirates, which is honoured to be Chairman of the Group of Arab States for this month, reaffirms anew the Arab position with regard to the question of reform and expansion of the membership of the Security Council, as set forth in the report of the Open-ended Working Group, contained in document A/51/47. The Arab Group represents 12 per cent of the total membership of the United Nations, and that proportion reflects the growing role the Group is playing in international political affairs and its contributions to the settlement of disputes before the Council, most of which are similar to the multidimensional problems that have caused enormous sufferings to the Arab nations in the course of past decades.

The institutional and political character of the Security Council at present has, on too many occasions, revealed an application of double standards when the Council deals with particular matters that relate to international peace and security especially those related to Arab questions. This fact urgently requires the redoubling of efforts within the Working Group, especially in the area of objective assessment of the

performance of the Council, in order to identify cases in which resolutions adopted by the Council have not contributed to enhancing the United Nations credibility and to understanding the root causes of such cases. Such an objective assessment of the Council's work should ensure arrival at a consensus on the mechanism that must be devised to establish the future composition of the Council and to revise its working methods in order to guarantee that the majority shall not be prevented from adopting a resolution or issuing a statement that would reflect transparency in the position of the international community towards questions of peace and security featured on the Council's agenda.

In this respect we call for the endorsement of the position of the Non-Aligned Movement as regards reforming the procedures and working methods of the Security Council and of its decision-making process. Within this framework, we refer to the proposals calling for an amendment to the Charter in order to develop acceptable criteria for rationalizing the exercise of the veto and to proceed further towards enhancing the coordination between the Security Council and other main organs of the United Nations, foremost amongst which are the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the International Court of Justice, along with regional organizations, with a view to evolving their effective participation in the area of providing political and legal advice and to improving the flow of information as a means of confidence-building and settlement of disputes and cases of occupation and aggression, through methods of peaceful negotiations.

Moreover, we stress that the framework for consultations between the Council and those States which are either directly affected by disputes before the Council or are contributing troops to peacekeeping operations is inadequate. The procedures of such a consultative framework must be evolved in order to ensure that these States are apprised in a regular fashion of the developments surrounding these matters. This would bolster their active participation in the plans and programmes for the peaceful settlements that are being sought.

In closing, my delegation hopes that the discussions of the Working Group will be crowned with success through arriving at a consensus that takes into account the concerns of most of the developing countries, especially in regard to strengthening their representation in the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. This would contribute to enabling the Council to handle its ever-growing responsibilities aiming at achieving and enhancing the desired peace, security and stability.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform the Assembly that this item will be kept open during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly for further consideration.

The debate on this agenda item, in the course of which we have heard 70 speakers, reconfirmed once again that the reform of the Security Council remains one of the backbones of the United Nations transformation. All speakers addressed this issue as a matter of paramount importance for the United Nations.

In my view, the debate proved to be very useful. It will provide guidance for and facilitate greater understanding in future deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group. In this connection, I would like to reconfirm my intention to begin substantive deliberations of the Working Group in the second half of January next year.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam), Vice-President, in the Chair.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the programme of work of the General Assembly with reference to the reports of the Main Committees.

I should like to inform members that the reports of the First Committee will be taken up on Tuesday, 9 December, in the morning.

Agenda item 18 and the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) will be taken up on Wednesday, 10 December, in the afternoon.

The reports of the Third Committee will be taken up on Friday, 12 December, in the afternoon.

The reports of the Sixth Committee will be taken up on Monday, 15 December, in the afternoon.

The reports of the Second Committee and the Fifth Committee will be taken up at a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.